

## Written Testimony Supporting

### H.B. No. 7285: AN ACT CONCERNING COMPLAINTS THAT ALLEGE MISCONDUCT BY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY PERSONNEL

Senator Doyle, Senator Kissel, Representative Tong, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Melissa Camacho. I was raised in Canterbury, CT, graduated high school from the town of Plainfield and went to college in Willimantic. I currently reside in Manchester, I work in our capitol city, my loved ones attend school in Windsor, I workout in West Hartford and I happily enjoy the many parks, museums, theatres, restaurants and other recreational venues throughout our great state.

In my 31 years as a resident of Connecticut, I have never had a bad encounter with a police officer. Unfortunately though, my experience does not reflect that of many of my friends, family or colleagues and I'm writing today to urge you all to take into consideration the proposed amendments to HB 7285.

It is apparent, after hearing various stories from loved ones and reviewing a recent study conducted by the ACLU, that changes need to be made to strengthen HB 7285. The proposed amendments to the law do not in any way undermine local law enforcement or their ability to do their jobs. I would argue instead, that the amendments only serve to strengthen local police departments' ability to respond to public inquiry, increase public trust and ensure continuous quality improvement and transparency in our communities.

After reviewing the ACLU's report, I was relieved when I quickly found the complaint process for my local police department online. However, after reviewing the complaint form I found my palms sweaty. The fact that a person cannot make an anonymous complaint against a member of the police force is beyond logic—I found myself thinking through whether I would fill out a complaint form against a police officer that asked for my name, address, phone number, email etc. The answer is probably not. Additionally, I could not find a version of the form in any language other than English. The form also requires a notary which I would argue creates an unnecessary burden for any individual who may want to file a complaint. Lastly, the form leaves little space to actually write the complaint and include all relevant details. In contrast, with a quick google search I found one police department's Civilian Compliment Form, which allowed for almost a full page to describe the (good) incident, while that same department's complaint form only had a few lines to describe the (bad) incident. A standardized form would help to alleviate these dramatic differences between forms within and across police departments.

For comparison, I researched how to make a complaint through my local healthcare provider, another highly respected profession that is tasked with public safety. I easily found the form and policy, both of which were translated into 15 different languages. Additionally, while providing identifiable information, the form noted in several instances all information would be kept confidential and the procedure included information on what to expect during and after an investigation. Many of these complaint forms are standard across healthcare providers not only in the state but across the country! For the healthcare field, these forms are used to ensure ongoing quality improvement, enhancing key health outcomes and patient safety.

In order to ensure, like our healthcare providers, our law enforcement agencies are held to high standards of transparency that instill trust in the eyes of the public, the following amendments to HB 7285 are proposed:

- the creation of a standardized complaint form that is translated into commonly spoken languages and that does not put undue burden on citizens filing a complaint;
- the enforcement of sanctions on police departments not in compliance with the law;
- the requirement that local police departments track and analyze complaints and report them annually.

In closing, I am in full support of amendments to HB 7285 in order to ensure that all residents of Connecticut are aware of how they can easily and readily file a complaint, are assured that their complaints will be taken seriously, and are confident that complaint data will be tracked overtime to ensure continuous improvement by our local law enforcement agencies to better serve the public.

Respectfully,

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